

Delaware wins \$4.2 million preschool development grant

Delaware has won a \$4.2 million federal grant to strengthen its early childhood system. The grant will help the state better prepare children from all backgrounds to enter kindergarten ready to learn and will improve their transition between early childhood programs and the K-12 system.

The Delaware Department of Education's Office of Early Learning – in partnership with the Governor's Office and other state agencies – applied for the one-year Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5).

The grant will fund a needs assessment and creation of a strategic plan focused on four priorities:

- Coordinated services for children birth through age 5 and their families
- Integration of data to influence early childhood policy decisions
- Tools to foster family knowledge-building and choice
- Professional learning across sectors using a shared whole-child development language

"This grant will help us improve the design of our early childhood system to help all children receive the highest quality early learning experiences and be ready for a successful transition to kindergarten," Governor John Carney said.

Critical to the state's plans is a needs assessment.

"Delaware must understand the experiences of families as well as early childhood professionals as they navigate our current system, which crosses state agencies and the public and private sectors," Secretary of Education Susan Bunting said.

“This needs assessment will allow subsequent policy and process solutions to be grounded in an analysis of the true needs of Delaware’s children and families.”

Delaware’s grant application built upon the state’s early childhood successes and existing priorities, including renewing the Delaware Early Childhood Council’s strategic plan for the next five years, Carney’s executive order making Delaware a trauma-informed state and the Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy grant that the state won to integrate its data systems.

“This grant came to fruition thanks to strong public-private partnership, a testament to Delaware’s shared commitment to quality early learning. The Early Childhood Council’s priorities align with the themes of this grant—improved parent information and access, stronger data systems, and deeper coordination among programs and providers to support children’s development. We look forward to leveraging this opportunity to chart the roadmap for the next five years in Delaware,” said Madeleine Bayard, Delaware Early Childhood Council chair.

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